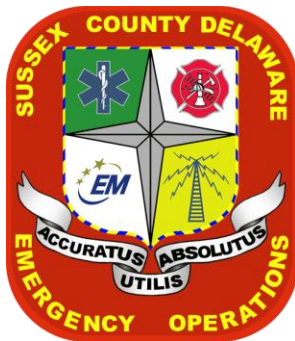


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Sussex County prepares for lashing from Hurricane Irene

*Storm center still expected to pass just off Delaware coast, but
could come close enough to bring hurricane-force winds, floods*

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

**1130 Hours, Thursday
Aug. 25, 2011**

The most significant tropical threat to the eastern United States in years continues its march toward the East Coast, and forecasters now expect Hurricane Irene could bring Sussex County and the mid-Atlantic region hurricane-force winds, severe tidal flooding, and torrential rains beginning as early as Saturday morning and lasting through midday Sunday.

The National Hurricane Center's latest forecast has the center of the Category 3 storm, now with sustained winds of 115 mph, to pass approximately 40 mph to 50 miles off the Delaware coast late Saturday night into early Sunday morning. At that time, the storm may be slightly less intense, at Category 2 status, with sustained winds of 100 mph. Still, the storm would be potent and close enough to Delaware to pose a serious threat to lives and property.

Forecasters do not expect Sussex County to sustain a direct hit from the eye of the storm. However, sustained winds of 50 to 75 mph or greater, with gusts to 100 mph, particularly along the immediate coast, are possible throughout the event. Meantime, the storm could create a surge of 2 to 5 feet of water along the oceanfront, Inland Bays and Delaware Bay, kick up swells of 12 to 24 feet on the seas, and dump as much as a foot of rain across the county.

No evacuations have been ordered, and no shelters have been designated at this time. However, Sussex County Emergency Operations Center officials are in close contact with State emergency planners this morning about the

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possibility of issuing an evacuation order for select communities and activating designated shelters.

The public is reminded to have supply kits ready, know the evacuation routes, and plan ahead on where to relocate, if needed. Residents in low-lying areas, particularly in the communities of Long Neck, Broadkill, Prime Hook, Slaughter Beach, and Oak Orchard, as well as along the Del. 1 corridor, including the Fenwick Island and Bethany Beach areas, should consider now relocating to safer, higher ground.

“This is a very dangerous storm we’re facing, and it looks more like a certainty than a possibility,” said Joseph L. Thomas, director of Sussex County EOC. “The public needs to take this threat seriously, and residents, property owners and visitors should be moving into action now to prepare themselves and their property.”

Forecasters believe Hurricane Irene’s current predicted track will come close enough to give Sussex County the strongest effects of the storm, with tidal flooding likely in low-lying areas, particularly along the oceanfront, Inland Bays and the Delaware Bay shoreline.

Residents and property owners should secure loose objects, such as lawn chairs and trash cans, to prevent storm winds from turning those items into potential projectiles. Also, residents in low-lying tidal areas should make sure submersible pumps are working and check storm drains to ensure they are clear of debris. Vehicles should be relocated from flood-prone areas.

The Sussex County EOC encourages residents and visitors to continue monitoring the tropics and conditions as they deteriorate. For updates, stay tuned to local television and radio stations, the Sussex County EOC website at www.sussexcountype.gov/services/storm, and the County’s Twitter feeds at www.twitter.com/sussex_pio and www.twitter.com/sussexctyde_eoc. The public should also monitor the National Weather Service, at www.nws.noaa.gov/er/phi, for the latest forecast.

For helpful tips on what to do in preparation for a hurricane, including the County evacuation map and other preparedness materials, visit www.sussexcountype.gov/services/storm.

For more information, call the Sussex County EOC at (302) 855-7801.

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Media calls should be directed to EOC spokeswoman Debra Jones at (302) 855-7801 or Sussex County Chief of Public Information Chip Guy at (302) 854-5000.